



# Cascade Christian Counselling E-News

*Cascade Christian Counselling Annual Spring E-  
Newsletter*

## **SELF - CARE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

**by Jan Bryant**

Twenty months ago the world as we knew it changed. Some of us had to work from home, home-school our children, or work out in the world with no sense of protection. We lost connection with our loved ones, our friends, our communities and activities. There were deaths and other losses, perhaps employment or homes. A year ago vaccines were on the horizon and there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Vaccines would be available, most people would get them, this uncertainty would be over, and we could resume a somewhat normal life. Vaccinations happened, but Covid did not diminish, and now life looks like a tunnel with no end. As humans, most of us are wired to feel calm and comforted by rhythm, routine, predictability, and some sense of security and control.

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If you were living with anxiety, depression, anger, grief or sadness before the pandemic, it is probably worse now. If you weren't, you might be experiencing those, and many more emotions now. Now, more than ever, it is important to take care of ourselves to be as healthy as we can.

Self-care is the long-term maintenance of your overall well-being: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. It is not taking a couple of hours or days off once in a while or treating yourself occasionally. It is a daily commitment to wellness so you can fulfil your calling, live well, and love well. Here are a few suggestions for caring for yourself in uncertain times.

### **What Are Your Priorities Now?**

In some ways, the pandemic has given us time to reflect on how busy we were before and realize some of the things we were rushing around to accomplish were not necessary or life-giving. When you feel overwhelmed, remind yourself of who and what is important in your life, focus on those things and let the rest go.

### **Know Your Limit, Play Within It**

A familiar slogan but good advice. Learn to say "no" politely and without guilt to activities, interactions and demands that are not life-giving or necessary or would demand too much from you right now. Then your "yes" to the important things can be enthusiastic.

### **Unplug**

Limit your time on your phone, computer, social media and TV. Learn enough from trusted sources to keep yourself informed, but not overwhelmed. Fear and anger can cause people to be irrational or reactive, create or spread misinformation, or communicate in negative or harsh ways. Don't engage. You can't have a reasonable conversation with an unreasonable person.

### **Go Outside and Move**

God created a beautiful world. It's still out there. Find places where you can walk, sit, cycle, birdwatch, observe, listen, contemplate. Fresh air and movement are restorative to body and soul.

### **Declutter**

Physical objects, especially when they are piled up, demand our attention but give nothing back. Deal with what needs to be dealt with, keep what is meaningful, and get rid of the rest.

Declutter your mind of negative thoughts, especially the ones that are on an endless loop but not going anywhere. The Serenity Prayer is useful here: Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

### **Nourish Yourself: Body, Mind and Soul**

Nutritious food, lots of water, and movement for your body. Truth, uplifting stories, biographies or podcasts for your mind. Reading, contemplation, deep conversations, prayer by yourself or with others for your soul.

### **Listen to yourself and others**

Be honest about what you are going through. Don't feel you have to put on a brave and cheery front. Connect with people who listen, understand and don't try to fix or cheer you up.

When you listen to others, let them say whatever they want without judgement or suggestions, unless they ask. Sometimes saying things out loud helps people find perspective and a way forward.

If you are overwhelmed and you don't have friends who can listen well or you want more help, see a counsellor to help sort through your concerns and learn some strategies.

I recommend Kate Bowler, a Canadian historian who is a professor at Duke Divinity School, has cancer, and is honest and funny about loss, grief and faith. In her podcast she interviews fascinating people who talk honestly about how they live with difficult circumstances.

### **Create**

Make something: bake, cook something new, sing or play a musical instrument, do woodwork, gardening, work with yarn or fabric, paint, draw, make pottery, build a sandcastle. Creating stimulates a part of the brain that helps induce both calm and excitement

### **Share**

Share your gifts, creations, skills, time, money - whatever you have that will make someone else's burden a little lighter. If you feel called to, stand up for social justice or other concerns for people and the planet.

### **What is Certain?**

This is a good question for each of us to consider as we are all in different circumstances. It is certain that God loves us and He will never leave us nor forsake us, no matter what we are going through. Everything does not happen for a reason. God does not give us more than we can handle: the fallen world does that. Once we have the security of a roof over our head and food on our table, one certainty is that love: God's love, our love, and the love of others, will sustain us in difficult and uncertain times. Dr. Bonnie Henry has wise words that I'm sure Jesus would endorse: Be calm, be kind, be safe.







## RESOURCE KIT

by Brent Unrau

Isn't it comforting to know that you have a spare tire with your car as you head out on a road trip or that you have a first aid kit with you when you adventure out for a challenging hike. These important aids are wise resources even if you don't end up needing them. When it comes to the wild, wooly and wonderful journey of living it is also wise, often needed, and maybe even vital to have resources with you that can come to the rescue in a time of need and vulnerability. This is even more true in the middle of an unprecedented and unpredictable pandemic that has impacted all of us and limited one of our most amazing resources, social time with each other. Not having free and flexible access to this communal resource has hurt and handicapped us all, making it even more important to find and rely on other resources.

However, do you know what your resources are and are you adding to your reserves? Possibly, you've forgotten some of your most tried and true stratagems or they've grown stale, predictable, needing a refresh. My invitation to you is to be more proactive in putting together a resource kit, a tool kit if you will, that holds your very own collection of aids that you can turn to and open in a time of need and vulnerability.

*"When it comes to the wild, wooly and wonderful journey of living it is also wise, often needed, and maybe even vital to have resources with you that can come to the rescue in a time of need and vulnerability".*

You might even change up the name and call it a toy box, inviting the idea of something to play with that will help you enter in the present moment more deeply and meaningfully.

Here are a few suggestions that might go in my resource toy box.

1. Music to enjoy and connect with whether it is playing an instrument or listening to my favourite playlist. Rumi, the Sufi poet, wrote, "Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened. Don't open the door to the study and begin reading. Take down a [musical instrument]."
2. Rumi's words remind me that poetry must go in this box. Even one physical poem a day, printed and placed above my desk, can take me out of my self-absorbed ruminations and stir up new life. If you are looking for a place to start in your exploration of poetry, I recommend this link:  
<https://onbeing.org/series/poetry-unbound/>
3. The great outdoors, sweet mother earth, invites you to take a forest bath or go for a walking meditation. Explore this short teaching on walking meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh:  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90Pzn6NK4VQ>). Consider the birds, trees and grass as Jesus taught. Simply go outside, pick a favourite location, and pay attention, using all of your senses to take in the moment. Add a special photo of the outdoors to your resource box—or a pinecone or other memento to remind you of this gift.

4. What about the resource of prayer or meditation? These are a must in my toy box. I would include a reminder to practice welcoming prayer:

(<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/welcoming-prayer-method/>) as well as a Post-it note that says, check out this great meditation website: <https://timsteadmindfulness.wordpress.com/>

5. I would also include two small journals. Write the word *Gratitude* on one and *Lament* on the other. Both are needed as they speak of living with both and being honest and real with both experiences. See helpful tips on journaling on David Steindl-Rast's resourceful site on gratitude: <https://gratefulness.org/practice/private-gratitude-journal/>

6. Consider finding your own symbol to connect to. I personally connect with water--a deep and powerful symbol for me. I would put in a photo that reminds me of the cleansing power of water and how I am permitted to enjoy it, drink it, play and soak in it.

I hope you are catching the bounty of this kit. I could go on and on—I forgot to mention dancing and laughter. Take time to create your resource toy box. You might even repurpose an old fishing tackle box. Make it real and accessible, not just a list.

Have fun with it and let me know what you come up with, the possibilities are endless. Don't forget that your resource box is alive, so you can change it, edit it, add to it so that it feels active and usable. If you have children, you may want to invite them to work on their own resource toy box and see what they come up with

***Note: I would love to hear from you when you've assembled your kit. A friend told me recently that hers holds a small Lego kit she assembles as a mindful practice. My granddaughter retreats to her dad's office and colours when she needs a break from her emotions.***

***Just email [info@cascadechristiancounselling.com](mailto:info@cascadechristiancounselling.com) with the resources you put in your kit or even what you choose for a toy box/kit. I am thinking about putting your resources together and including them in a future Newsletter, so please let us know if it ok to use your name or if you want to be left anonymous.***

